

**Notes from District 3 - Community Meeting  
10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness  
City of Long Beach**

**Date:** Saturday September 17, 2005  
**Time:** 1- 3 PM  
**Location:** St Luke's Episcopal Church  
525 E. 7th Street, City of Long Beach, 1<sup>st</sup> District (Bonnie Lowenthal,  
Council Member)

**Opening Remarks:**

Don Smith spoke initially with an opening statement asking community members to please fill out speaker cards. Don introduced himself and Jack Garrett as consultants with Long Beach City and their focus to end homelessness in the community. Don directed the audience to the front of the room to the outline of today's discussion and reviewed the bullet points of the outline. He instructed the audience to be sure and pick up the handouts at the table. Then Don did an overview of the handouts, holding them up as he referenced them to the audience. Some of the handouts were regarding: City of Long Beach Structure, Planning Process, Volunteer Survey (a way to get involved, a process involving active community participation), and a Public Comment Sheet (so the audience are on the record they can fax their comments to the number at the bottom of the page or at a later time as well).

Don Smith continued by stating the goal for the community. He mentioned programs being implemented in other communities. The focus is broad-based community input, looking for solutions to homelessness, and informing the community of opportunities to participate. He reinforced needing involvement, not just comments to implement over time. Don further provided background on the issue stating that the National Alliance to End Homelessness came up with a blueprint and challenges communities to develop strategies. They're doing this on a regional level as well. Communities are working on these strategies. There has been a decrease in the length of homeless episodes. A goal is to prevent homelessness before it happens. The goal is "within reach" – just like the community came up with the title of today's discussion because he continued that it is within our reach to rise to the challenge. This success requires: active community commitment, commitment time and energy (be apart of committees on page 2), and forge new broad-based partnerships (ability to think creatively – no ideas are out-of-bounds). Homeless people to corporate boardrooms. Don referred to "Focus Groups" handout and mentioned the stakeholders and to begin to formulate strategies planned to go the City Council – hopefully implemented by all of the people in the community.

Don continued to review the goals of the meeting. He stated that the discussion forum should be a safe environment for all opinions and the audience members again needed a speaker card to do that. Reviewed proper discussion format: waiting to be called upon to speak, being able to complete comments without cross-talk, speaking 5 minutes or less and respecting the time frame, refraining from speaking while someone else is speaking, no recording of comments, and turning off pagers and cell phones. Then

asked if there were any questions before beginning. One audience member asked where we are in the 10-year plan and stated that the mayor's group has had a group meeting. Don stated that this is a separate process - just a planning process.

### **Summary of Public Comments:**

Don introduced Niki Tennant, representing Council Member Bonnie Lowenthal's office. Niki said that Bonnie couldn't be there because she is on the East Coast but will be attending more focus groups. Their focus is on: finding permanent housing and establishing a Housing Trust Fund (affordable housing) and encouraged the audience to add their voice to that discussion.

Cynde Soto, commented that if the Housing Trust Fund is permanently funded then it will go well to support it.

Elaine DesRoches, who is an advocate for mental health stated that in the 60's people with mental illness received treatment and everyone was housed until death. She just wants to let audience know how it went when people were put out of mental institutions. 70% were passive and objects of violence. Families have a hard time keeping them at home unless have Medi-Cal. 1/3 of those with mental illness are homeless. They self-medicate themselves with tobacco (which possibly calms Schizophrenics) and alcohol. The uninsured have no services. The treatment needs to be better. In the 90s we understood medicines that help not just sedate. We need that treatment and individualized medical diagnoses. Trial and Error to get the right medicine to the right people. No genetic disposition. Over 70% can be treated effectively. Depression causes the biggest loss of income. Schizophrenics – some treated and improved. Physical damage is permanent. At Elm and 5<sup>th</sup> Village ISA receives state funds but they are capped ...prop 63 last year will help with permanent housing not shelters. So won't have to hit rock bottom before somebody helps them.

Cherokee Morrison, who is affiliated with the Homeless Assistance Program, stated he was in Vietnam, which caused some problems for him. He had a substance abuse problem. He mentioned 8<sup>th</sup> Street Sober Living. He stated he had a mental-illness. He mentioned dual recovery sober living being costly at \$2000. He couldn't do it at the time he needed it. Need to keep a place open. He wanted to thank another community member who cared about him enough to help him out. He stated he's been 11 years clean and sober!

Diana Haye, who is affiliated with Shower Program Coordination, runs the homeless shower program at St. Luke's. It provides services to 200 people. The city needs to address the problem of lack of facilities – other than a drop-in center to shower and place to hang out. Concern with no ownership. Need programs with more ownership so that they can take pride and make it safe for people. Need a prescription program. Need general relief –not sure how that would work for affordable housing. States that affordable housing will not eradicate homelessness. Stated from her observations in her program that the mentally disabled are down on their luck.

Dora Jacildo, a service provider, stated her concern for childcare services to families experiencing homelessness. She used the example of recent hurricane victims to point out that people react to what they see. We're not as reactive to an ongoing need and feels children have no voice. She states that children are living stressful lives, going through trauma, and are overburdened. She is concerned with them growing up healthy. Wants to know how to change it for the children. States it's simply a Band-Aid i.e. one year of care for 100 children. There's no long-term success and children are vulnerable. During the first five years of their life the foundation of trust is set. Wants long-term services from transition to the mainstream.

Elaine Des Roches, stated the process is President-defined as the homeless are single adults and she wants to know if we can include families?

Kelly Parker spoke about the Transient School close to the village. The focus is primarily men, but the number of women and children is larger. There's no place for what women and children need. The women on the streets are abused and the children are the future. If in homeless environment could be lifelong and lasting.

Maria Giesey stated she is a community liaison for Long Beach and the homeless. She is concerned that we are teaching children how to be homeless. Says they won't learn how to be anything else i.e. independent...they'll grow up thinking everybody else will do it for you. If babies are stressed, it's not a good start. If in shelter babies' cheeks become rosy again and black circles are gone because they are touched in a caring way. She is concerned with what we are doing to the children.

Ken Davis, who is affiliated with Catholic Charities, stated that there is a need to treat people individually. He states that they are depressed at where they are in life. He also feels like we are doing Band-Aid work. Treating individuals and not trying to group them he thinks is the way to help solve homelessness.

Don Smith asked if there was anyone else who wanted to contribute to the Open Forum.

Don introduced Jack Smith as apart of the Working Group. He asked the audience how many were a part of it as well and several hands went up (about six).

## **Summary of Discussion**

### **1. Housing**

Don stated we want to look at homelessness in a different way. Traditional way is the encounters on the streets. Short term – 30 days of shelter, transitional shelter – 90 days, and permanent housing. Want to get them off streets into housing with intensive services to address needs or supportive housing. University of Pennsylvania tracked for two years. Communities saved \$16,000 a household. Can we afford it? Needs to be a commitment to strategies to make them work. Any thoughts and ideas on this?

Elaine Des Roches, stated homeless prevention...rental and mortgage...associate funds...Pasadena ...has good neighbor policy – staying in touch with neighbors before end up on the streets or other negative ways.

Diana Haye, stated that the city needs rental controls. People are forced out because they can't afford it anymore.

Elaine Des Roches, stated if rent is raised 80-90% it is not right i.e. \$600-1100/month. Then an entire family will become homeless. If rent raised 5-10% then it's better. Long Beach City Federal \$ has been cutback – Section 8 – on housing the city made up the difference but not sure this year. The disabled lose. Long Beach could ask for ... the County Dept. of Mental Health shoved out of Section 8 ...Don't have to be homeless – with one time funds for permanent shelter.

Maria Giesey, states apartment housing association will come down on us for rent control. She wants a count of all apartments.

Ben Rockwell stated to lower the rents.

Cynde Soto stated there should be tax credit incentives for apartment owners.

Elaine Des Roches, stated redevelopment process. 70% of residential areas are rentals and 30% are homeowners, which contributes to the landlords' attitudes.

Kelly Parker, stated employment and training education to increase earning potential.

Shar Jones, asked what expenses do renters have? Could rentees do the work to supplement rent, skilled labor, or other services? Get Long Beach citizens to want to protect them and do well. Most people want to ignore them. (=bartering) Called Sweat Equity if buying a house.

Niki Tennant, supported fair housing. If a tenant over a year -90 days notice – roll back to 60 days. Find housing rather than throw out in the streets.

Dora Jacildo, stated Healthcare for Children as a concern. How to increase subsidies and other support or care services to families in need.

Bob Hildebrand, stated support of State Proposition 46 providing rent subsidies from state through the city so it may continue working for people.

Ben Rockwell discussed developing after-hours subsidized transportation. When public transportation has a fixed route... When bus is no longer available: 6 pm-12: 30 am

## 2. Chronically Homeless

Don Smith stated Chronically Homeless are individuals who are on the streets for a year or longer with a disability or have experienced four episodes of homelessness in past three years. These individuals use almost 50% of resources... provide with extensive services: single room occupancies and safe havens – stable place to call home.

Ben Rockwell, stated people who have made a conscious choice to be homeless than be in a home or a shelter may have a mental problem. They also may not want to be tied down. He went on to talk about his cousin who has an inheritance could be in a home but chooses not to.

Don Smith stated the community is creating a plan. Some communities have developed a plan so that there is no choice. It is called assertive aggressive effort. "Assertive Community Treatment" includes social workers, police, etc. Coordinating to get homeless people into housing. Zero Tolerance for allowing people to be on the street.

Elaine Des Roches, stated mental illness patients would rather hide in the bushes than get abused in the shelter. "Path" in Hollywood is a temporary shelter that has sections for women, men, children, those with AIDS, a jail for misdemeanors, medical section, and a job skill section.

Elaine Des Roches, stated when apply force ...let up...revert to own people. It is a process – ask them what direction they want to go ... Village ISA... not a location. Provide services: skills to maintain apartment and for needs they have. Ease into transition from everyday crisis.

Maria Giesey stated if homeless a long time and get treatment process much earlier it seems a costly way to go about it.

Diana Haye stated from her observation there is a 6-month period from when first on the street when the people still have passion to get off the streets and find employment. Then there is a 6-month turnover. Fight/ Flight. They go into survival mode and become part of the street mentally. She feels all programs need to be revolving around these issues. She wants to know what can we do for the fresh off the street – how to keep them from becoming apart of the street?

Don Smith asked what could we do for those hardened?

Diana Haye, stated that we need to give them compassion, a place to get cleaned up, and to come to meetings like this to learn about another shelter and share that information with homeless people.

Ben Rockwell, stated that working in conjunction with other cities... transferable SRO for the person with wanderlust, who needs to wander around. Have it arranged to have an SRO in another SRO.

Elaine Des Roches, stated that something like "LAMP". Apartment to live in -mental illness subculture-beyond working poor. The education is impacted for these people. They have trouble reading applications for work- project return the next day. Social Clubs throughout the country including Antelope County get them to ride public transportation. Health insurance provided by employer.

Niki Tennant stated the homeless have family somewhere. Suggests actively engaging the family of homeless people. Educate the family, give them legal advice, opportunities to bring the homeless person back into the family.

Shar Jones stated that communication between the cities working on plans should happen we should not reinvent the wheel. She suggested borrowing ideas from other jurisdictions.

Elaine DesRoches, states that Supervisor Antonovich, 7-10 years ago offering homeless solutions. Should request a copy of study. Highly successful in reuniting the family - got trust, confidence of homeless without involving the police. Arcadia was the Test Model.

Maria Giesey, states in the Times this morning in China that they are teaching people to be polite. We need to have classes on how to treat the homeless people. Some people don't say hi and people look away. Being more polite would help bring in homeless people. Church groups provide sandwiches in Lincoln Park on Saturday and Sunday. Then they are criticized for the liter that is left on the ground. Education is needed in the community.

### 3. Transitional Homeless

Don Smith stated these are individuals in crisis, loss of income, substance abuse, and stuck with nowhere to go.

Ben Rockwell, asked the audience how many in the room have been homeless? Three people raise their hands. He states he was homeless for two weeks. States that a transitional homeless state often occurs due to natural disasters or so called acts of God.

Don Smith asked him what would have made it easier for you?

Ben Rockwell, replied accessible living place without giving any finances back. Check made it more difficult to try to find something.

Ken Davis, mentioned a roommate service – a city sponsored service would be useful.

Cynde Soto, suggested setting up a fund, to assist with making rental facilities with substandard disability access ADH compliant.

Elaine Des Roches, stated Interfaith Community Organization know people are homeless. When rent doubled and increased 90% we may need to publicize it. Incorporate ICO in the process.

Jack Smith stated that the invisible group is the Emancipated Youth. They become homeless on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. ICD and IFC provide a place to stay and resources. Can be effective. These programs are way more than Big Brother. They provide them with a place to live until their feet are on the ground.

Cynde Soto, mentioned the Eviction Protection Program (Homeless Prevention). Provides education and money.

Ben Rockwell stated a need for stronger purchasing incentives. Section 8 for rentals can be used for mortgage payments, remodel, revamping, decorate not by apartment complex regulations.

Dora Jacildo stated there is shame with homelessness. There is a need for service providers and the community to educate so they don't fall into shame, which makes it more difficult to move forward. Focus on emotional well-being and a sense of hope.

Diana Haye, concerned with Transitional Homelessness. Those incarcerated or those in transition with no idea when they are going need resources available to them. Also, there is no place to send them on the weekends. There is a need for more drop-in centers on Saturday and Sunday, weekend information, and resource centers.

Elaine Des Roches, stated other cities give a one way bus ticket to court appearance then they have no \$ so they are stranded with no way to return. Counsel the homeless so if they do it themselves it is legal and can stay there, especially with the historic areas of town.

Niki Tennant, stated to get involved Habitat for Humanity...sweat equity type housing here in Long Beach. It is her understanding that Habitat for Humanity's focus is more in the North than in Long Beach City.

### **Other Comments/observations**

Diane Haye stated she is a professional and also volunteers on a community level in her program. She states a concern for the number of teens on the streets and girls taking on sex to be protected by those male partners. Young teen girls/boys?

Jack Smith stated to coordinate a faith-based organization in town – adopt a homeless person like an exchange student. It can be set up rather officially. He's looking for an effective way to make an impact.

Diana Hays stated she has issues with having to find Jesus before taking care of homeless. She states a child needs counseling to help that person.

Bryan Loyce stated an interest in Foster Youth Life Skills Training. Transitional Youth ages 16-21. His issue is with the schools. He thinks they need to take on a bigger part. The children he deals with can't read and write. His program should be enhancing skills that are already there. But they are not. He wants to know why the schools are not putting that into place.

Dora Jacildo, stated people are important. People change lives not services. Anybody can set up shop.

Ben Rockwell stated not all homeless are uneducated. Some have their PhD or their Master's Degree. Whatever the circumstances – one county (state) to another. No job - become homeless. His daughter moved here and he got her into a shelter immediately. If not she would have been immediately on the streets. He continued that lots of people are in that condition.

Shar Jones, stated that there are 200 listings of churches in Long Beach city. Look up interfaith community org (ICO). Do not depend on them for contacting all churches.

Jack Smith, stated that there is Interfaith Counsel too.

Don Smith stated that this is just the beginning and asks everyone to fill out the survey.

**Adjourned**